

ARMED FORCES NURSING SISTER

NURSING SISTER—A registered nurse who practises her profession as a member of the Canadian Forces Medical Service and holds the Queen's Commission in the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army or the Royal Canadian Air Force.

HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE

Nurses have long been associated with the armed forces. Perhaps the best known woman who administered nursing care to military personnel was Florence Nightingale, who served heroically with the British Army in the Crimea in the middle of the 19th Century.

In Canada, nurses were members of the military medical team as far back as 1885 when, during the Northwest Rebellion, two groups were organized to care for the sick and wounded. Since that time, women have played an increasingly important part in the nursing care of the members of the Canadian Armed Forces.

In the South African War, the First World War, and during the Second World War and in the Korean conflict, Canadian nurses cared for the sick and injured in Service hospitals at home and overseas.

During the Second World War, the demand for medical support increased rapidly as each of the Armed Forces expanded. The Canadian Army enrolled large numbers of nurses and, to meet the growing requirement, the Royal Canadian Navy and the Royal Canadian Air Force formed their own nursing branches.

In 1959, the medical personnel of the Navy, Army and Air Force were integrated to form the Canadian Forces Medical Service (CFMS).

NATURE OF THE WORK

The Canadian Forces Medical Service (CFMS), under the direction of the Surgeon General, provides skilled medical care to the personnel of Canada's Navy, Army and Air Force, in Canada and overseas.

Nursing Sisters of each of the Armed Forces are employed in medical units of the CFMS, performing functions similar to those which nurses undertake in communities large and small across Canada. Service medical facilities range from small units where only emergency and out-patient care are given, to fully accredited active treatment hospitals. In these hospitals, a Nursing Sister's duties are comparable to those of her civilian counterpart. She may be a general duty nurse, an operating room nurse, an instructor, a head nurse or be in charge of the nursing service as a whole. Included in her responsibilities as a general duty nurse are the planning and supervision of the nursing care given by auxiliary medical personnel in the non-commissioned ranks of the three services.

In some areas, the Nursing Sister provides care for the families of service personnel through health clinics and in the medical establishments.

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WORKING CONDITIONS

CFMS Nursing Sisters normally work an eight-hour day, five days a week. These working hours include evening and night duty, but such duty is usually planned in advance and does not constitute a hardship. Hours of work are arranged locally to meet requirements of the unit; hence all systems are not the same. Off duty time is comparable in each establishment.

QUALIFICATIONS NECESSARY FOR ENTRY AND SUCCESS

An applicant for enrolment in the Canadian Forces Medical Service as a Nursing Sister must be a registered nurse and a current member of a provincial Registered Nurses Association. The applicant must be single, female, under the age of 35 and be able to meet the physical requirements of the service for which she is applying—the Navy, the Army, or the Air Force. She must be a Canadian citizen or a British subject resident in Canada with status of a landed immigrant.

PREPARATION NEEDED

HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS—The young woman in high school who is interested in becoming a Nursing Sister must first become a Registered Nurse. The Canadian Armed Forces do not provide this training and so applicants must graduate from a school of nursing. The minimum standards for admission to schools of nursing are set by provincial law, but each school has its own particular requirements, which are set forth in the school calendar. High school students interested in entering the nursing profession are advised to obtain Senior Matriculation standing, Grade 12 or 13 depending on the province.

There are two main types of schools of nursing in Canada: (i) those administered by hospitals, and (ii) those associated with universities.



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The length of the course in most hospital schools of nursing is three years. In some of these schools the first two years of the course are spent in closely correlated theory and practice and the third year is an internship in which the nurse undertakes additional responsibility under supervision. In others the theory and practical experience are integrated throughout the three years.

The length of the course in schools of nursing associated with universities is usually four years, and student nurses graduate with a baccalaureate degree in nursing.

Further detailed information on nursing training may be obtained by writing the Canadian Nurses Association, 74 Stanley Avenue, Ottawa 2, Ontario, or from the Registered Nurses Association in your province.

REGISTERED NURSES—A Registered Nurse who is interested in becoming an Armed Forces Nursing Sister must meet the requirements outlined in the "Qualifications Necessary for Entry and Success" section of this monograph.

In addition to the professional, citizenship, physical and other qualifications described in that section, a nurse needs certain other training designed to meet the unique requirements of a Nursing Sister in the Canadian Forces Medical Service. Accordingly, an orientation course of five weeks' duration is given to all new Nursing Sisters at the Canadian Forces Medical Service training centre in Camp Borden, Ontario. This course is designed to acquaint the newly enrolled Nursing Sister with the basic principles of service life and her specific responsibilities in Armed Forces' nursing.

EMPLOYMENT, ADVANCEMENT, OUTLOOK

On enrolment, a Nursing Sister may choose a short service commission of two, three, four or five years. She is enrolled in the Royal Canadian Navy in the rank of Sub-Lieutenant, in the Canadian Army in the rank of Lieutenant or in the Royal Canadian Air Force in the rank of Flying Officer. The three ranks are equivalent.

On the basis of her ability and the recommendations of her commanding officer, she may qualify for promotion to the rank of Lieutenant in the Navy, Captain in the Army or Flight Lieutenant in the Air Force after six years of service. Promotion to the next rank, Lieutenant-Commander, Major or Squadron Leader, is by selection to meet the requirements of the Service.

During her initial period of service, she may apply for a permanent commission if she decides on a career, or she may request an extension of her short service commission.

Nursing Sisters in the Canadian Forces Medical Service serve in Canada or in Canadian Forces establishments overseas, and are posted from one unit to another to meet service requirements.

For example, Nursing Sisters serve in the National Defence Medical Centre in Ottawa; Canadian Forces Hospitals in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and Kingston, Ontario; Royal Canadian Naval Hospitals at HMCS Cornwallis, Nova Scotia, and Esquimalt, British Columbia; the Toronto Military Hospital; the Alberta Military Hospital in Calgary; on Royal Canadian Air Force stations from Comox on Vancouver Island to Goose Bay in Labrador; or at isolated stations in northern Canada.

In Europe, Nursing Sisters are employed at the Canadian Base Medical Unit in Iserlohn, Westphalia, West Germany, or with RCAF Fighter Wings at Marville, France, and Zweibrücken and Baden-Solingen in West Germany.

Nursing Sisters are selected for post graduate training to prepare them for special positions within the nursing branch of the Canadian Forces Medical Service. This selection is made on the basis of ability and interest in a particular field. Those Nursing Sisters serving with short service commissions may be selected for short courses and those serving with permanent commissions may be selected for university training in nursing education, public health and other subjects.

REMUNERATION

Canadian Forces Medical Service Nursing Sisters are paid at rates comparable to those paid registered nurses in civilian life. In addition, Nursing Sisters receive free medical and dental care, hospitalization and 30 days' leave with pay annually. On joining, an initial allowance of \$450 is paid for the purchase of uniforms.

The following table shows the rates of pay for Nursing Sisters in the Royal Canadian Navy, the Canadian Army and the Royal Canadian Air Force.

(As at 1 January, 1964)							PLUS SUBSISTENCE ALLOWANCE When rations and quarters are not available.
MONTHLY PAY							
Including Progressive Increases for Years in Rank							
Basic 2 yrs 4 yrs 6 yrs 8 yrs							
Navy—Lieutenant- Commander	}						
Army—Major		\$555	\$580	\$605	\$630	\$655	\$113
Air Force— Squadron Leader							
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Navy—Lieutenant	}						
Army—Captain		\$428	\$448	\$468	\$488	\$508	\$ 95
Air Force—Flight- Lieutenant							
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		3 yrs 6 yrs					
Navy— Sub-Lieutenant	}						
Army—Lieutenant		\$331	\$371	\$386			\$ 90
Air Force— Flying Officer							

In addition to basic pay and subsistence allowance (if applicable), Nursing Sisters are paid special allowances when serving abroad or in Canada's north.

A pension plan, on a contributory basis (6% of pay and allowances), provides security on retirement to the Nursing Sister who has made a career in the Service. A retired Nursing Sister receives an annuity for life equal to 2% of her annual pay and allowances averaged over any six consecutive years of service chosen by her, multiplied by the number of years of her service up to a maximum of 35. For example, a retired Lieutenant-Commander, Major or Squadron Leader, with 25 years' service and no more than six years' service in that rank, would receive an annual pension of approximately \$4,000.00.

ADVANTAGES

The Canadian Forces Medical Service provides an essential service to the Armed Forces and thereby offers a high degree of personal satisfaction.

Comfortable, attractive quarters are provided, as well as meals, or an allowance (subsistence allowance) is paid.

Nursing Sisters are members of the Officers' Mess at their establishment and enjoy the privileges associated with this membership. Each armed forces establishment has a program of recreational interests for its personnel, including sports, hobbies and social, cultural and community activities. All officers are encouraged to take part in them. Facilities include well-equipped gymnasiums, some with swimming pools. Libraries and theatres are available and facilities usually exist for skating, curling, tennis and other sports.

Protestant and Roman Catholic church services are held in all armed forces establishments.

A Nursing Sister wears the distinctive, attractively tailored uniform of the service in which she is enrolled. In each service, there are different uniforms for different occasions; a nursing uniform worn when working with patients, summer and winter dress uniforms corresponding to civilian street clothes, and a "mess dress" for formal occasions. Civilian clothes may be worn when off duty.

Living and serving in different parts of Canada and overseas is a stimulating and interesting experience. Those Nursing Sisters who are appointed to serve at establishments in Europe have the opportunity to tour many countries and to visit places of historical and cultural interest.

The Canadian Forces Medical Service offers a nurse valuable experience in different environments, opportunities for advancement, a respected position in the community and an opportunity to travel and make many new friends.

DISADVANTAGES

The work of a Nursing Sister, while within the capabilities of a healthy young woman, is demanding. The hours of work include evening, night and weekend duty. Nursing Sisters sometimes serve in isolated or semi-isolated communities, and can expect to be moved to new locations from time to time during their careers, under circumstances which may not always be to their immediate liking.

HOW TO GET STARTED TOWARD THE OCCUPATION

WHERE TO APPLY—Young women who want to obtain more information or to make application for enrolment should visit or write the Navy, Army or Air Force recruiting office in one of the following cities (addresses are listed in the relevant telephone directories):

Vancouver, B.C.	Fort William, Ont.	North Bay, Ont.
Victoria, B.C.	Windsor, Ont.	Montreal, P.Q.
Calgary, Alta.	London, Ont.	Quebec City, P.Q.
Edmonton, Alta.	Ottawa, Ont.	Saint John, N.B.
Regina, Sask.	Hamilton, Ont.	Charlottetown, P.E.I.
Saskatoon, Sask.	Toronto, Ont.	Halifax, N.S.
Winnipeg, Man.	Kingston, Ont.	St. John's, Nfld.

—or—

You may write to: The Surgeon General,
National Defence Headquarters,
Ottawa 4, Ont.

RELATED OCCUPATIONS

A Nursing Sister's work in the Canadian Forces Medical Service is similar to that of a Registered Nurse in any community in Canada, with the exception that the Nursing Sister has a vital responsibility for Armed Forces auxiliary medical personnel; they depend on her for the on-the-job training and supervision on which their career advancement in technical qualifications and rank depends. Another differentiation for the Nursing Sister is that she is an officer in one of the Armed Forces; elements of her life related to this fact are unique.

FOR FURTHER READING

BOOKS: *Three Centuries of Canadian Nursing*—By J. M. Gibbon. The MacMillan Company of Canada, Limited, Toronto, Ont.

The Official History of the Canadian Medical Services, 1939 to 1945. Two volumes. By W. R. Feasby.

PAMPHLETS: *Nursing in the Canadian Forces Medical Service*—Available from the nearest Navy, Army or Air Force Recruiting Office or by writing to: The Surgeon General, National Defence Headquarters, Ottawa, Ont.

PERIODICALS: *The Crowsnest*—the magazine of the Royal Canadian Navy. (Monthly). The Queen's Printer, Ottawa, Ont.

The Canadian Army Journal—The magazine of the Canadian Army. (Monthly). The Queen's Printer, Ottawa, Ontario.

The Roundel—the magazine of the Royal Canadian Air Force. (Monthly.) The Queen's Printer, Ottawa, Ont.

This occupational information monograph was published in March, 1964. It is one of a series prepared by Naval Headquarters, Ottawa.

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